



Connecticut State Building Trades Council

KEITH R. BROTHERS
President

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Executive Director

Testimony of
Joseph Toner, Executive Director
CT State Building Trades Council

Education Committee
March 15, 2023

SB 1198 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the School Indoor Air Quality Working Group

Senator McCrory, Representative Curry, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and distinguished members of the Education Committee, my name is Joseph Toner, and I am the Executive Director of the CT State Building Trades Council. We represent approximately 30,000 construction workers across the state. I am proud to submit testimony in strong support of SB 1198 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the School Indoor Air Quality Working Group.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the need for updated HVAC systems in schools to provide our students, teachers, custodians, nurses and other school staff with safe air quality standards. Before the pandemic and still today, Connecticut schools exhibit conditions that promote mold, poor air quality, and temperature and humidity levels that undermine teaching and learning. The legislature made progress in 2022 addressing these matters by providing funding for some remediation and establishing a work group to create recommendations for the legislature to improve the indoor air quality problems within our schools.

SB 1198 seeks to address the poor indoor air quality within Connecticut schools by extending the charge of the working group until July 1, 2024, to ensure that their final report is comprehensive, science based, and equitable for everyone impacted. It requires the Department of Administrative Services to prescribe forms and establish an online portal for the collection of Ventilation Verification reports that can track all school districts and ensure funding for upgrades are dispersed equitably. The proposed legislation also seeks to extend the deadline for initial Ventilation Verification reports to January 1, 2025. This extension will guarantee that all districts will have access to trained and certified technicians and design professionals to perform the work. The bill also allows for waivers for equivalent inspections performed in a different format, or for inspections already scheduled to take place after the deadline.

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As currently written, SB 1198 requires that schools perform an inspection using the Environmental Protection Agency's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools program every three years. Based on legislative recommendations, we suggest that the inspection should occur annually to ensure the program succeeds. Reporting should be kept at every 5 years to prevent unnecessary administrative burdens.

The members of the building trades are highly qualified, properly trained and are ready to get to work to improve the unhealthy conditions within our schools. We urge the committee to support SB 1198 with the suggested change.

Thank you,

Joseph Toner
Executive Director

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